



NEWS RELEASE

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Elementary Students Make Significant Gains In U.S. History and Civics, According to The Nation's Report Card™

Eighth- and 12th-Graders Improve in U.S. History But Show No Change in Civics

BOSTON (May 16, 2007) – America's elementary school students have made significant gains in U.S. history and civics, according to results from The Nation's Report Card™, continuing a trend shown in other academic subjects.

Two reports released today – *The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2006* and *The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2006* – offer new data on the achievement of America's fourth-, eighth- and 12th-graders on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in U.S. history, which was last assessed in 2001, and civics, last assessed in 1998. The reports are published by the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Department of Education.

Overall achievement has improved significantly at all grade levels in U.S. history, and at the fourth-grade level in civics. Meanwhile, civics achievement for eighth- and 12th-graders has not changed significantly since 1998.

Gains at the fourth-grade follow a pattern of higher achievement on recent NAEP assessments in reading, mathematics, and science that is in contrast to the mixed performance reported at higher grade levels.

Among 12th-graders the improvement in U.S. history shown in today's report marks the first time since 1998 that high school students have had a significant increase in achievement on a NAEP assessment. On all NAEP assessments since then – in reading, math, science, and civics – results have indicated flat or declining performance.

"While there is need for additional improvement, the achievement of American elementary school students in history and civics is important and encouraging," said Darvin M. Winick, chair of the National Assessment Governing Board. "It is especially good news that gains have been made by the lowest-performing students, and achievement gaps are closing."

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According to the reports, the percentage of fourth-grade students performing at or above the *Basic* level has increased from 64 to 70 percent since 1994 in U.S. history and from 69 to 73 percent since 1998 in civics.

At the same time, the percentage of fourth-graders performing at or above *Proficient* was relatively unchanged at 18 percent in U.S. history and 24 percent in civics. In eighth and 12th-grades there were improvements in U.S. history at both the *Basic* and *Proficient* achievement levels but no change in civics at any achievement level in either grade.

Performance of Student Groups

In U.S. history, White, Black, and Hispanic student groups at all grade levels have increased achievement since 1994. However, achievement has not changed for Black students at any grade level or for Hispanic 12th-graders since 2001.

In addition, White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps in U.S. history have narrowed since 1994 in fourth-grade, though the gaps have remained relatively unchanged since 2001. Similar gaps at eighth- and 12th-grade levels have not changed significantly since 1994.

In civics, White and Hispanic students at grades four and eight have increased achievement since 1998, along with Black students in fourth-grade. Performance for Black eighth-graders was not significantly different, and no student group has improved at the 12th-grade level.

Meanwhile, the White-Hispanic achievement gap in fourth-grade narrowed to 26 points in 2006 from 35 points in 1998. Other White-Black and White-Hispanic achievement gaps at grades eight and 12 were not significantly different since 1998.

The 2006 NAEP assessment in U.S. history was administered by the National Center for Education Statistics to a nationally representative sample of 29,000 students at grades four, eight, and 12. The 2006 NAEP assessment in civics was administered to a nationally representative sample of more than 25,000 students at grades four, eight, and 12.

Copies of *The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2006* and *The Nation's Report Card: Civics 2006*, and additional data from the 2006 NAEP assessments, are available online at <http://nationsreportcard.gov>.

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The Nation's Report Card is the only nationally representative, continuing evaluation of the condition of education in the United States and has served as a national yardstick of student achievement since 1969. Through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), The Nation's Report Card informs the public about what America's students know and can do in various subject areas, and compares achievement data between states and various student demographic groups.

The National Assessment Governing Board is an independent, bipartisan board whose members include governors, state legislators, local and state school officials, educators, business representatives, and members of the general public. Congress created the 26-member Governing Board in 1988 to set policy for NAEP.